

Adventurer Works Hard to Establish

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Anti-Castro Base Near Covington

By BILL STUCKEY

Local Cubans and a shadowy American adventurer have been working feverishly—but unsuccessfully—for over a month to set up an anti-Castro guerrilla training base near Covington.

The American soldier-of-fortune, The States-Item learned, is Gerald Patrick Hemming, who goes by the nomme de guerre of Jerry Patrick. He claims to be an ex-Marine.

Patrick first popped into the news last summer when Miami newspapers found he was training anti-Castro guerrillas in the Everglades. He called his band the Intercontinental Penetration Force. Both he and "Interpen," however, dropped out of sight last fall after the FBI began checking to see if he was violating U.S. neutrality laws.

Last February, Patrick showed up in New Orleans, apparently at the invitation of local Cuban Revolutionary Council leaders and other Cubans who wanted to take direct action against Castro. With the help of anonymous U.S. patrons, the Cubans began supplying Patrick with machine guns, explosives and other military supplies.

Patrick made regular trips here, slipping in and out of the port secretly in a modern, well-equipped PT boat.

Last spring, another anonymous U.S. patron offered the Cubans and Patrick a large tract of land—complete with air strip on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Patrick agreed to set up a training base, handling classes of 50 or so Cuban recruits at a time. After completion of the training, the guerrillas would be like their Everglades counterparts, transported to Cuba secretly to work with the anti-Castro "Clandestine" (underground).

The men would also have been used to make lightning raids on the Cuban coast to divert the attention of Castro's

militia from important sabotage missions.

Louis Rabell, local delegate to the Cuban Revolutionary Council, however, confirmed that last week the Miami council headquarters nixed the Covington base for undisclosed reasons.

Who is this Patrick?

RABELL DESCRIBES HIM as a rangy, six-foot-seven type who can shoot two heavy machine guns from the hip at the same time, cowboy style. Miami sources say he wears an Australian bush hat, sports a neat beard and wears his hair long and wavy. He's been described as an Erroll Flynn type in appearance, a French musketeer type and as the "biggest, strongest and handsomest" man in Interpen.

Although he claims his group has little money, local Cubans guess that he has extensive financial backing. His equipment is of the latest model, and the power boat he brings here periodically is "at least a \$20,000 job."

Patrick tells Cubans he wants to topple Castro because the Fidelista regime imprisoned his Cuban wife on charges of "counter-revolutionary activity." She has been sentenced to 30 years.

About 30, Patrick claims to have served with the Marine Corps for more than four years, including a stint in the Far East as a sergeant with the Marine Air Wing. However, when Patrick first began to get headlines there, Miami sources said Marine records show no trace of either a Patrick or a Hemming.

Patrick also says he was a paratroop instructor with Castro in 1958, and stayed on with the Cuban regime until August, 1960. About the time he left Cuba, he was also involved in an "invasion" intended to topple the Somoza regime in Nicaragua.

Estimates of the size of his organization range from 30 to 100 men—Cubans, Americans, Latins, Canadians and others.



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"We weed out all the crackpots and bums," he has said. Interpen is connected with the International Anti-Communist Brigade headed by Frank Fiorini, another American who fought with Castro (and who was rewarded by coming overseer of Havana gambling operations after Batista's fall). Now at odds with Castro, Fiorini claimed earlier this month that 20 of his men had landed in Cuba's Matanzas province.

BOTH FIORINI AND PATRICK at one time had connections with Sanchez Arango, former minister of foreign relations and education under pre-Batista President Carlos Prío Socarras. It's an educated guess that Patrick's g-backer might be Prío, who reputedly left Cuba with huge fortune.

Although the Patrick guerrilla base plan fell through, there is enough happening to whet the appetite of any invasion-rumor connoisseur.

Last April, The States-Item confirmed for the first time that Cubans were trained here, at the old Algiers munition dump, for the Bay of Pigs invasion. Their Cuban leader, an ex-Castro officer named Nino Diaz, returned to Miami when the New Orleans force was unable to land.

Latest reports now are that Diaz and a group of from 10 to 100 men returned to Cuba within recent weeks, and are fighting now in the Sierra Maestra mountains of Matanzas province.

AT LEAST EIGHT OTHER refugees who lived in New Orleans are now in Cuba with the underground, Rabell said. The only such refugee whose name he remembers, said, is Carlos Lazaraba, a pilot.

Broadcasts from the three underground radio transmitters inside Cuba, which are occasionally received here on short wave, also indicate the presence of New Orleans Cubans on the island. A favorite code message to relatives

here would go something like this—"Carlos Garcia says he certainly misses that grocery store back on Miro street." Other local landmarks are also referred to in the broadcasts.

And in Miami a tremendous wave of optimism has swept the large Cuban colony there, according to Girardo Abascon of the highly respected and informative Truth About Cuba Committee. (Abascon, former owner of a distillery in Cuba before Castro, was here recently. He and other committee workers translated important news items from Castro news media and circulate them in printed form throughout this country.)

All this comes on the eve of a significant Castro anniversary—July 26. On that date nine years ago, Castro first burst into Cuban headlines when more than 100 of his followers made a suicidal assault on the Moncada barracks, a Batista army base in Santiago, Oriente province.

AT HIS TRIAL FOR THE Moncada assault, Castro delivered an eloquent address outlining his program for a "democratic and socially just" Cuba—an address admired by many of his anti-Communist followers.

The upshot of the whole affair is that Castro's political group was named the "Movimiento 26 de Julio."

Abascon reports that Cuban press says Castro plans a tremendous demonstration in Santiago on the 26th in honor of the anniversary. It might be interesting to know what kind of demonstrations the anti-Castro underground are planning the same day.

Interestingly enough, a newly-arrived refugee, Eduardo Domínguez, told The States-Item he was in on planning that 1953 Moncada assault. He said he had known Castro as a student in the University of Havana (where Domínguez studied accounting).

Ah, but reliable old fate stepped in and Domínguez didn't get to go on the Moncada assault. Reason?

"I lost my pistol," he said.

ANTI-CASTRO SOLDIER OF FORTUNE JERRY PATRICK has been supplied with arms by local Cubans since February. Patrick, and his plan to open a guerrilla training base here, are described in the column "New Orleans and the Americans" today on Page 13.

